in rural areas and providing high-level services for the country's economy and of achieving teledensity targets. Number of rural telephones have increased from 36.5 lacs in March, 1999 to 91.5 lacs in March, 2002 and rural teledensity per 100 population has increased from 0.68 in March, 1999 to 1.21 in March, 2002. As on 31st December, 2002, rural teledensity is 1.42 and for the country as a whole is 4.79. In line with the objectives of NTP-1999, National Development Council has approved the proposal to achieve rural teledensity of 3 and overall teledensity of 9.91 by the year 2007 for the Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-2007).

Decrease in mail traffic

1569. SHRIMATI BIMBA RAIKAR: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there has been overall decrease in mail traffic during the year 2000-01 as compared to previous year;

(b) if so, the extent of decrease in different categories and the reasons therefor;

(c) whether postal services including telegraphic services are getting beyond the reach of the common man because of steep hike in tariffs in contrast to telecom facilities which the cheaper and affordable; and

(d) with the decrease in postal traffic, what has been the impact on the efficiency and productivity of the staff?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI SU. THIRUNAVUKKARASAR): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The extent of decrease of mail traffic in various postal services for the years 2000-01 compared to previous year 1999-2000 is given in the Statement (*See* below). The decline in postal traffic is due to the rapid growth of other means of communications including telephone and internet.

(c) The postal services including telegraphic services are within the reach of common man. So far as Telegraphic Services are concerned, there have been no revision of tariffs for the last 20 years, since 1983.

The rates of postal services are decided taking into account various factors *viz.* Cost of operation, user prifile, price elasticity, price of competing service etc. while revising tariffs of its products/services. Except for five services i.e. Competition Postcard, Speed Post, Insurance, Foreign Post and Mahila Smiridhi Yojna (MSY), all other services are provided at the rates which are less than the cost incurred by the Department to provide them.

The telecom and postal services are complementary to each other. These services cater to needs of different segments of the society and have different niche in terms of the users. The reach of postal departments is very deep and varied as compared to the penetration of Telecom facilities in India.

The Department of Posts is providing efficient postal services through subsidized products and services. New initiatives like Panchayat Sanchar Sewa Kendras for the rural areas are also meant to provide easy access to basis postal facilities in a cost effective manner.

(d) Though the mail traffic has decreased yet the Department has started financially viable premium products and services like Speed Post, Business Post, Greeting Post, Media Post etc. to cater to the needs of business and corporate clients. The Department has also explored new prospects of business in partnership with other organizations for example 'Money Transfer Service' in Collaboration with Western Union, 'Electronic Fund Transfer' in collaboration with UTI Bank and E-Post Project. In terms of revenue, the efficiency and productivity have increased.

Statement

Details of traffic of postal services for the years 1999-2000 and 2000-01

Sl. No.	Name of Service	1999-2000	2000-01 decrease/ increase from previous year	%age
1	2	3	4	5
1	Postcard	3117	2640	-15.30
2	Printed Postcard	1383	1312	-5.13

1	2	3	4	5
3	Competition Postcard	58	88	51.72
4	Lettercard	4756	4382	-7.86
5	Letter	9585	9120	-4.85
6	Regd. Newspaper—Single	1044	1099	5.27
7	Regd. Newspaper—Bundle	204	192	-5.88
8	Book, Patter & Sample Packet	1027	949	-7.59
9	Printed books	216	171	-20.83
10	Other periodicals	154	150	-2.60
11	Parcels	606	785	29.54
12	Acknowledgement	1710	1673	-2.16
13	Registration	2525	2226	-11.84
14	Speed Post	313	378	20.77
15	Value Payable Post	91	92	1.10
16	Insurance	95	91	-4.21
17	Money Orders	1232	1229	-0.24
18	Tele. Money Orders	27	1	-96.30
19	Indian Postal Order	413	360	-12.83
20	Foreign Mail	539	383	-28.94
		29095	**27321**	

Revenue from Telegraphic Services

1570. SHRIMATI BIMBA RAIKAR: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether alongwigh postal (Mail) services, the telegraphic services are also earning less revenue are not viable:

(b) whether FAX/e-mail facilities have made telegrams redundant; and

(c) what are the plans for diversification of the existing infrastructure and absorption of the staff in both Telecome/Telex-Teleprinter segments which have become obsolete?